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REPORT OF THE SECRETARY

Since the question of the QUARTERLY is to be definitely reviewed and passed upon by this Convention, it is appropriate for me to present briefly a record of the undertaking from its inception. Ex-President S. W. Williston was the first to urge upon Sigma Xi the need of a medium of communication between the chapters, and in public and private repeatedly advocated the establishment of a periodical publication. As chairman of the Council, Prof. E. L. Nichols in 1903 wrote every chapter, asking support for such an organ. The New York Convention discussed it in 1906; and later conventions carried on the discussion until finally in 1913 the Cleveland Convention took definite action establishing the QUARTERLY.

The plan of the publication has been modified in various ways during the past five years, and as a result of the different experiments and discussions the Executive Committee last May voted to adopt the following general plan for the annual series of four numbers, the sequence being naturally subject to modification with changing circumstances:

1. Official record of the Annual Convention and matters pertaining thereto.
2. Current history of the Society, especially annual reports of chapters.
3. Official record of the Executive Committee meeting and matters presented by it for the consideration of the Society at large.
4. Proposals for action at the Annual Convention, discussions thereof, and annual statistical summary of membership.

In addition each number is to include also such other available material as reports, news items, and notices of particular celebrations in various chapters, with special discussions and briefer papers on the Society, its policy and history. But the material was to be limited to that specifically related to the Society of the Sigma Xi and its work. In brief, to quote the record of the action taken by the Executive Committee, it was voted to recommend the continuance of the QUARTERLY primarily as a journal of record and means of communication between the chapters.

The work of the past five years shows that the publication has not found a demand in the Society for service in the rôle of a news journal. Special efforts have been made at various times by different

officers of Sigma Xi to emphasize this function for the QUARTERLY and to secure news items from the chapters. President Howe even organized a special group of reporters, one from each chapter, to furnish current items of interest from that chapter; but almost nothing was sent in. Apparently the members feel that other periodicals can discharge this function better, and accordingly it may be given over to them.

Others have urged that the QUARTERLY assume for the Society the function of a scientific journal and seek to encourage research by the publication of reports covering the definite researches conducted by members or presented before chapter meetings. Apart from the evident difficulties of getting such material in proper form for publication and providing space to print the large amount of it that might be offered under such a plan, it may be urged that the material which is presented tentatively for the sake of the discussion that it will arouse, ought not to be published; and that which is final finds place in event of its being valuable in technical journals of the field to which it belongs. To duplicate such printing either before or after is at least a doubtful means of encouraging research, and in the opinion of many, deserving of severe criticism as troublesome and wasteful. Furthermore, in this rôle the QUARTERLY would at best be competing with numerous other scientific journals already well established and would merit some of the criticism recently passed upon it. (See QUARTERLY for December, 1917, page 125.)

There is, however, one function that the QUARTERLY has attempted to discharge from its inception, and that has been mentioned prominently in every proposal for the establishment of such a journal, as well as in every recommendation of any official body concerning it. It is the function emphasized in the recommendation of the Executive Committee and now before this Convention, and may be tersely put in the statement that the QUARTERLY is the journal of record for the Society of the Sigma Xi.

The Society is served by officers who in most chapters remain in office but a short time; the records are kept in a variety of ways and often go astray, so that it is in some cases impossible to secure a list of members elected, while dates of election, type of membership, and basis for election are much more uncertain. The Secretary's office has more than once received letters stating that the writer was a member of the Society in a given chapter when in-

quiry failed to elicit evidence of the fact from the chapter records. In every case it has been possible to establish the fact by other evidence, but such defects in the record are unfortunate. The influence of Sigma Xi is growing and membership is becoming yearly more highly prized. It is certainly incumbent on the Society to protect its membership against doubt as to their own standing and possible imposition by unworthy outsiders.

There is no need to emphasize here the effect of growth upon the organization of Sigma Xi, since this factor has been discussed many times in recent conventions and in published articles. Chapters scattered so widely naturally lack means of contact. They are apt to develop special methods and thus gradually grow apart from other sections of the organization. It is imperative that each chapter learn of the practices in other chapters, and that, for efficient service, the Society develop along reasonably uniform lines. This is not in any sense the suppression of individuality. It is, however, the careful selection of the best methods and their general application, with due allowance for local differences. The Society needs to know what is being done in every section of its membership, and such knowledge can best be obtained through a centralizing agency, like our official publication.

PRESENT MEMBERSHIP OF SIGMA XI

In the December (1917) number of the *QUARTERLY* was published a summary of membership statistics. The secretary desires to express his thanks to the various chapter secretaries for their promptness in responding to the request for data. This year only three chapters, Brown, Michigan, and Texas, failed to furnish data for the record.

From an inspection of the total it appears that from the chapters reporting during 1917 in all 803 new members were admitted to the Society. From the chapter reports these were distributed as follows:

Undergraduates	206
Graduate Students	348
Faculty	120
Alumni	39

Adding this total to the previous records it appears that the membership of the society has reached 10,715. This figure, however, is

too low because every year some chapters fail to report and the office is constantly in receipt of information concerning persons who desire to be recorded on the rolls and who have learned in one way or another that no return of their election has been made.

Cornell still remains the largest chapter with a total membership of 1371. Yale follows with 828; then come Pennsylvania with 748 and Illinois with 707 members. Minnesota, Ohio, Columbia, Chicago each have a membership of approximately 500 members; Rensselaer, Kansas, Nebraska, Iowa, Stanford, and Wisconsin count their total membership at a little over 300. Union, Case, and Missouri have passed a total of 200 members each. Indiana, Colorado, Northwestern, Syracuse, University of Washington, Purdue, Washington University, and District of Columbia Alumni Chapter have between 100 and 200 members each.

These figures do not depart much from the relative position of the institutions with reference to attendance and where they do the departure is determined by the relative age of the chapter. It is worthy of note that these chapters are probably the largest individual organizations in the institutions mentioned which are bound together by distinctly personal ties. One must recognize the splendid influence and the power for efficient work and right development which an organization with such a membership can exercise in the institution of university rank. The influence of individual chapters is steadily growing, year by year, with the success of the work undertaken and the increase in the sum total of productive scholarship displayed by the chapter. The active chapters constitute bodies large enough in membership and influential enough in personnel to be important factors in the every day life of their respective institutions. Cornell leads all the rest in members, having 233 active members; one-third of the chapters have more than 100 active members and only five of them fall below an active membership of 50. These five are all located in institutions of relatively restricted numbers and undoubtedly exercise in them proportionate influence despite their absolute inferiority of numbers to chapters in much larger institutions.

Last year it was noted that Chicago, Indiana, Syracuse, Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Missouri had abandoned the practice of electing undergraduates to the membership of the society. According to the reports of the chapters this year, Colorado has joined the number.

The District of Columbia chapter elects no new members whatever. Although all of the chapters just mentioned have not added to the number of undergraduate members, that total still shows an increase of 34 in this year's table as compared with the figures for last year. On the other hand, the total of graduate elections has been decreased by 13. It appears not improbable that this is an indication of the influence of the war which is bound to be conspicuously felt in the organization this year and in the near future. The number of graduate students among the men especially has been so distinctly reduced by the patriotic response of those students to the call of the country that the numbers eligible for election have fallen to a lower figure than for many years.

Sigma Xi certainly faces a new period in its history. It may not, indeed it must not, stand still, but it cannot hope to add largely to its membership until the solution of the world problems at issue in the present conflict permits a larger number of men to turn their attention to productive scholarship.

Elections from the faculty show an increase of 27 over last year. There are also 28 more alumni members than shown by the record of a year ago. The latter figure is not very significant, because alumni members are elected in smaller numbers and usually periodically so that when some chapter located in a large institution revises its list, the total from this grade is likely to be markedly increased at a given moment. This apparently sudden increase is in fact but the natural growth that extends over a number of years.

MEMBERSHIP RECORDS

A year ago the Executive Committee instructed the secretary to send out a request to each chapter asking that the card index of members kept in the secretary's office be brought up to date. As noted last year, this request received the hearty approval of the different chapters. The response was immediate and generous and even chapters which were unable to respond at once expressed their desire to meet the request at an early date in the future. Plans formulated at that time have not been fully carried out during this year. Some failures to meet promises are due to changes in chapter officers and the dropping of work by men who have been called to take up essential duties for the nation. As a result the confusion in the work of the different chapters is more than ordinarily great.

It is hoped that the chapters which have not yet furnished the necessary information may be able soon to bring their records up to date. In spite of these difficulties the general index of the society has made marked progress. The following summary will indicate the extent to which each chapter has coöperated in furnishing data for the index.

- 1 Cornell: Membership cards filed for elections through 1917; records complete and in good shape.
- 2 Rensselaer: Not all cards for 1907-1908 have been received; no cards at all after 1908.
- 3 Union: Cards filed in index include 1917 and previous elections.
- 4 Kansas: Cards filed in index include 1916 and previous elections.
- 5 Yale: Cards sent in include 1908 and previous elections.
- 6 Minnesota: Cards filed for elections up to August 16, 1916; only two cards sent in for 1917.
- 7 Nebraska: No cards in index for elections after 1908.
- 8 Ohio State: Cards filed in index include 1917 and previous elections.
- 9 Pennsylvania: Cards received include elections for 1916 and previously.
- 10 Brown: Last cards received cover elections for year 1915.
- 11 Iowa: No cards received for elections after 1908.
- 12 Stanford: No cards received for 1913 elections; cards sent for 1914, 1915, and 1916 elections.
- 13 California: Cards complete to September 1, 1916.
- 14 Columbia: Last cards received were for 1907 elections.
- 15 Chicago: No cards for 1905, 1906, 1907; cards sent in for elections of 1908 and through 1916.
- 16 Michigan: Last cards received were for year 1913.
- 17 Illinois: Cards complete and filed up to 1915.
- 18 Case: Last cards received were for 1908 elections.
- 19 Indiana: No cards for 1912, 1913, 1914, 1915. Cards received for 1916 elections.
- 20 Missouri: Cards sent in through 1917.
- 21 Colorado: Last cards received were for 1916.
- 22 Northwestern: Last cards received were for elections of 1917.
- 23 Syracuse: No cards for 1909, 1910, 1911; otherwise cards complete through 1916.

- 24 Wisconsin: Cards received through 1911 elections.
- 25 University of Washington: Cards received through 1916.
- 26 Worcester: No cards for 1912, 1913, 1914, 1915, or 1916; those for 1917 received.
- 27 Purdue: Cards last received were for 1916 elections.
- 28 Washington University: Cards received include 1917 elections.
- 29 District of Columbia; Cards received include 1915 elections.
- 30 Texas: Cards received include 1916 elections.

It would be an advantage to the chapters as well as to the Society in general if these records could be put at once on the official index cards which are furnished by the Society gratis in case a duplicate set is made for the general index. For the benefit of those who have not aided thus far in this work may I call attention to the fact that the constitution provides for four classes of members and only four such. Furthermore, if an individual has been elected by a chapter on a certain basis, i. e., under the specifications set down for the election of graduate students, that person should be listed continuously as a graduate member. On the other hand, if he transfers to another chapter, by virtue of his election as a faculty member in the institution where that chapter is located, he should be classified for the purpose of their report among the faculty members. A moment's consideration will show that the records would become badly tangled if we endeavored to shift individuals from one class to another as often as they might be changed from an individual position to another in a given institution.

I cannot close this presentation of the work done on the society records without calling attention to the especially perfect records which are in possession of two of our oldest chapters, viz., Cornell and Pennsylvania. They have reported fully and clearly concerning election of every member and have been able to bring the membership roll of the chapter up to date without difficulty.

It may interest and very likely surprise some members of the Society to learn that so far as I know there are few chapters which are in shape to speak absolutely with regard to the elections they have made to membership in Sigma Xi. In some chapters the records do not permit of reaching more than an approximate conclusion as to the different elections which the chapters have carried out, and the secretary's office is constantly in receipt of correspondence indicating the positive belief of individuals that they have been received into the Society when the individual chapter record does not

show evidence of the fact. Sufficient collateral evidence has been furnished in many instances to show that the statement of the individual is correct and that in some way or other the record is at fault. The only way in which this can possibly be obviated is to have a regular and systematic publication of elections practically at the time at which they are made. The executive committee has recommended strongly that the chapters should take especial care to make such publication and it hopes that despite the slight extra labor involved the secretaries may be willing to do so promptly.